(a) whether it is a fact that length of the runway of Patna airport is less in comparison to the the runways of other national level airports; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government for the expansion thereof, so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The physical runway length at Patna airport is 7500 feet and usable length is 6400 feet due to presence of obstacles (trees) in the approach path. State Government of Bihar has been requested by this Ministry as well as by Airports Authority of India (AAI) to prune/cut the trees identified to required safe height. But, Government of Bihar is yet to take action in this matter.

Once all the identified trees are pruned, the usable length of runway will increase to 7000 feet and it will be suitable for operation of A-320/B- 737-800 type of aircraft with less load penalty. Further extension of runway is not feasible due to site constraints.

Old Aircrafts with AI

801. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) when the last time Air India ordered new planes for its fleet;

(b) the details of new planes bought by Air India in the last three years;

(c) to what extent Air India is using planes which exceed 15 years age;

(d) whether it is a fact that safety and speed are ignored by Air India; and

(e) the steps proposed to upgrade the fleet of Air India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Air India had last placed a letter of intent in August, 1991 with M/s. Boeing Company for delivery of four 747-400 aircraft to be delivered in 1993 and 1994. There were options available, which were exercised in the year 1996 for delivery of two more 747-400.

(c) The details of aircraft which are more than 15 year of age are 9 x B747-337C, 3 x B747-437 and 3 x B 747-200 (these three aircrafts are phased out from Air India's fleet but not deregistered).

(d) Aircraft are considered airworthy as long as they are maintained as per annual maintenance programme of DGCA as well as the regulatory requirements stipulated by the DGCA as well as the regulatory authorities of the aircraft manufacturing countries. All the aircraft in Air India's fleet are maintained in airworthy condition without compromising safety factors and meet all the requirements of the regulatory authorities.

(e) Air India has submitted project reports for Government's approval for induction of 18 x B 737-800W aircraft by its subsidiary AICL and 50 new aircraft by Air India during the period 2006-07 to 2012-13.

Decline in lA's market share

802. SHRI C. PERUMAL:
SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the market share of Indian Airlines has come down to 38.2 per cent when compared to the previous market share of 65.9 per cent in 1997-98 due to competition by the private sector in aviation industry; and

(b) if so, what measures Government are taking to improve its market share in the coming years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL):(a) During the year 1997-98, the market shareof Indian Airlines Ltd. was 65.4% and 37.1% in the year 2004-05.

(b) Indian Airlines proposes to undertake fleet augmentation/renewal to increase its capacity share so as to increase its market share. Besides this the Indian Airlines is taking following measures to improve its market share:—

— Marketing initiatives

— In-flight initiatives

— Service upgrades on ground

— Improvements in cabin ambience.